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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on two processes used to begin a long-term series of studies on educational power structures in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Purposes of the study were to determine if (1) substrata or pools of power undergird educational power structures, (2) certain paths to power are typically followed by influentials, (3) separate power structures exist for grades K-12 and postsecondary education, and (4) power structure changes can be predicted. The research method used involved asking the executive director of each state education association to make a list of the five to ten most influential decision-makers in the state and then asking each of these persons to do the same. After two rounds of interviews with 112 persons, consensus was reached on 50 top leaders. The other method used was also a modified reputational process. The paper draws no conclusions, since additional work in progress is testing the efficacy of the processes. Observations are made, however, about the number of noneducators who are influential in educational decision-making, and the number of individuals originally tagged as second and third raters who move into the power structure. (Author)

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IDENTIFYING POWER STRUCTURES

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SUMMARY

The paper reports on two processes used in a six-state area over a two-year period of time to identify educational power structures. The first process is based on Bonjean's adaptation of Hunter's technique; the other is also a modified reputational process.

The paper draws no conclusions, since additional work in progress is testing the efficacy of the processes. Observations are made, however, about the number of noneducators who are influential in educational decisionmaking, and the number of individuals originally tagged as second and third raters who move into the power structure.

IDENTIFYING POWER STRUCTURES

Martha L. Smith
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This paper reports on two processes which we have used to begin a long-term series of studies on educational power structures in the six state area of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Among the assertions which undergird our planning and work are these:

1. There are persons commanding resources (influentials) who do affect educational policy.
2. Most of those persons are not educators.
3. There are cost-effective techniques which can be used to identify the influentials.

Among the questions which we propose to answer are the following:

1. Are there substrata or pools of power undergirding educational power structures?
2. Are there paths to power which influentials typically follow?
3. Are there separate power structures for grades K - 12 education and for postsecondary education?
4. Can power structure changes be predicted?

To develop a design, we considered three general approaches: the decisional approach popularized by Dahl (Who Governs?, 1961), the reputational approach pioneered by Hunter (Community Power Structure, 1953), and the positional approach, the procedure initially used in the International Studies of Values in Politics (see Clark, p. 465).

We also reviewed stratification theory and pluralistic theory, and Polsby's argument that use of the first theory invariably encourages research designs which lead to unprovable assertions about power.

Not unlike a plethora of sociologists whose works we have examined, we determined (1) that our own continuing study could best be served by a "mix" or modification of methods; and further (2) that we would organize and implement a series of small studies--each simple in design but aggregating a large body of data over a multi-year period of time. Such a plan should allow for use of different approaches simultaneously for both validity checks and cost analysis.

One more caveat:

Most studies of power structure in a community, state, or national setting encompass (a) institutions: economic, government, religion, and education; and (b) associations: professional, civic, and cultural. The locus of our work is education alone, but we do not see it as a simple or isolated institution. We perceive the policies and problems of education inextricably related to all of the others, with people, events, and issues overlapping and impacting in ways that are not always immediately obvious.

We therefore are proposing to use a variety of tools over time to discover patterns and paths of power.

The work on which I am reporting today is reputational, but it is being buttressed by other work which is decisional.

The study is an outgrowth of a major 1976-77 institutional planning effort of Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, reported in two earlier papers. Part of that effort included the identification of 50 persons as influential in educational decision making in our six-state area.

The method used was a Bonjean adaptation of the Hunter power structure survey technique. It involved asking the executive director of each state education association for a list of the five to ten most influential decision makers in the state, and then asking each of those persons to do the same. This was continued until new lists were yielding almost total duplications. After two rounds of interviews with 112 persons, consensus was reached on 50 top leaders. There were, in addition, 22 persons named half as frequently and 15 persons approximately one third as often. For purposes of the study, these persons were tagged second rate and third rate. The 50 included 8 persons in Arkansas, 9 in Louisiana, 9 in Mississippi, 7 in New Mexico, 8 in Oklahoma, and 9 in Texas. No effort was made to rank the individuals.[1]

The occupational/role categories to which these influentials belonged, in rank order, were educational associations, state legislatures, local education agencies, state departments of education, governors' offices, business and industry, higher education, labor, and laypersons. Three categories alone--educational associations, state legislatures, and local education agencies--accounted for 72 percent of the influentials.

In 1979 we conducted a similar small study, duplicating the 1977 methodology to identify the top 50 influentials. Consensus was reached after five rounds of telephone interviews with 67 persons. In a final protocol telephone call, each influential was asked which persons he had not worked with, as a way of testing for interaction. One was not

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[1]These individuals were subsequently asked to participate in a futures forecasting activity for the institution; so no further data were collected on interaction patterns.

available for comment; two gave replies indicating that they had not recently been involved with two others (not the same persons), and three indicated an individual (again, not the same person) with whom he did not wish to be involved, or that his interaction was always limited in any case with that person.

Influentials from two new occupation/role categories were added, and rankings of the categories shifted slightly. Table 1 shows that most influentials continued to come from educational associations, state legislatures, and local education agencies, but the ranking of the top two had reversed with a decline of seven in the associations and a gain of seven in the legislatures. The top three categories in 1979 accounted for 66% of total, a decline of six percent from the previous study.

Table 1
TOTAL REGION
Rankings of Occupation/Role Categories in 1977 and 1979

CATEGORY	No. 1977	Rank 1977	No. 1979	Rank 1979
Educational Associations	15	1	8	2
State Legislature	11	2	18	1
Local Education Agencies	10	3	7	3
State Dept. of Education	5	4	5	4
Governor's Office	3	5	4	5
Business and Industry	2	6.5	3	6
Higher Education	2	6.5	0	10.5
Labor	1	8.5	2	7.5
Lay Person	1	8.5	0	10.5
Intermediate School Agencies	0	10.5	1	9
State School Board	0	10.5	2	7.5

A comparison of percentage distribution of the influentials by occupation/role categories for 1977 and 1979 is found in Table 2. More than a third of the influential in 1979 (36 percent) come from state legislatures--up by

14 percent from 1977, while representation from educational associations decreased by almost half, from 30 percent to 16 percent.

Table 2
TOTAL REGION
Percentage Distribution of Fifty Influentials
By Occupation/Role Categories for 1977 and 1979

Occupation/Role Category	% in Category in 1977	% in Category in 1979
Educational Associations	30%	16%
State Legislature	22%	36%
Local Education Agencies	20%	14%
State Department of Education	10%	10%
Governor's Office	6%	8%
Business and Industry	4%	6%
Higher Education	4%	0%
Labor	2%	4%
Laypersons	2%	0%
Intermediate School Agencies	0%	2%
State School Board	0%	4%

Table 3 explicates by title each of the eleven general categories of influentials, and further clarifies the intent of change numerically and by percentage. Higher education personnel, laypersons, local school superintendents, and elected officials of educational associations either declined in number or disappeared entirely from the group. It is noteworthy that the number of Chief State School officers within the group of influentials increased in 1979 and that chairpersons of the state school board were included.

Table 3

TOTAL REGION
Analysis of Occupation/Roles Held by Influentials in 1977 and 1979

Category / Role Title	No. in 1977	No. in 1979	Change No.(%)
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	(2)	(3)	(+1)(+50%)
1. Ex. Dir., Business Lobby	0	1	+1
2. Ex. Secy., State Assoc. of Business & Industry	1	1	0
3. Pres., Major Corporation	1	1	0
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	(15)	(8)	(-7)(-47%)
1. Ex. Dir., School Board Assoc.	5	3	-2
2. Ex. Dir., State School Administrators	1	3	+2
3. Ex. Secy., State Ed. Assoc.	4	1	-3
4. Past Ex. Dir., State Teachers Assoc.	1	0	-1
5. Pres., School Board Assoc.	2	1	-1
6. Pres., State Assoc. of School Admin.	1	0	-1
7. Pres., State Federation of Teachers	1	0	-1
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE	(3)	(4)	(+1)(+33%)
1. Budget Director	0	1	+1
2. Education Budget Director	1	1	-
3. Ex. Asst. to Governor	1	0	-1
4. Governor	1	1	0
5. Legal Advisor to Governor	0	1	+1
HIGHER EDUCATION	(2)	(0)	(-2)(-200%)
1. Director, Higher Education	1	0	-1
2. President, University	1	0	-1
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL AGENCIES	(0)	(1)	(+1)(+100%)
1. Director	0	1	+1
LABOR	(1)	(2)	(+1)(+100%)
1. Director, State AFL/CIO	1	1	0
2. V.P., State AFL/CIO	0	1	+1
LAYPERSONS	(1)	(0)	(-1)(-100%)
1. Political Campaign Volunteer	1	0	-1
LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES	(10)	(7)	(-3)(-30%)
1. Superintendent	10	7	-3
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	(5)	(5)	(-)(-%)
1. Chief State School Officer	4	5	+1
2. Deputy Chief State School Officer	1	0	-1
STATE LEGISLATURE	(11)	(18)	(+7)(+64%)
1. Chrm., House Appropriations Comm.	1	1	0
2. Chrm., House Education Comm.	0	2	+2
3. Chrm., Senate Education Comm.	1	2	+1
4. Chrm., State Legislative School Study Comm.	1	1	-
5. Representative	4	5	+1
6. Senator	4	5	+1
7. V. Chrm., House Education Comm.	0	1	+1
8. V. Chrm., Senate Education Comm.	0	1	+1
STATE SCHOOL BOARD	(0)	(2)	(+2)(+200%)
1. Chperson, State School Board	0	2	+2

The same data are aggregated by state and analyzed for stability by person and by role in Table 4. Four possibilities are presented for the power structure: same person--same role, same person--different role, different person--same role, different person--different role. Forty-eight percent of the influentials (24) in 1979 occupied the same role which they had held two years previously, while four percent (2) remained in the group but in new roles. Twelve percent of the influentials (6) identified for the first time in 1979 occupied roles which had been held by 1979 influentials; the remaining 36 percent (18) were new people and new roles. The arresting fact is that 60 percent of the influentials roles are identical for both years.

Table 4
TOTAL REGION
Analysis of Stability/Change in Power Structure, 1977-1979

State	N	SP-SR		SP-DR		DP-SR		DP-DR	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Arkansas	8	5	63	0	0	2	25	1	12
Louisiana	9	5	56	1	11	0	0	3	33
Mississippi	9	5	56	0	0	0	0	4	44
New Mexico	7	3	43	0	0	3	43	1	14
Oklahoma	8	4	50	0	0	1	12	3	38
Texas	9	2	22	1	11	0	0	6	67
Total	50	24	48	2	4	6	12	18	36

Note: SP-SR = Same person--same role
SP-DR = Same person--different role
DP-SR = Different person--same role
DP-DR = Different person--different role

Our data revealed further that of the persons who were new in the power structure in 1979, 11 (46 percent) had been second rate in 1977 and eight (33 percent) had been third rate. Only five (21 percent) had not been included in the 1977 study.

Also revealing in an analysis by sex and ethnicity is that the 1977 influentials included 94 percent Anglo males, four percent Black males, and two percent Anglo females; the 1979 influentials included 100 percent Anglo males.

Even though no women had been identified as influentials in mid 1979, we felt that a modified reputational approach would identify those women most influential in educational policy making.

Our method was to solicit names by telephone and interview from the following sources:

1. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Board of Directors,
2. One informant in each state department of education,
3. One influential from each state identified in the previous study,
4. Seven federal committees (the Interdepartmental Task Force on Women, President's Advisory Committee for Women, the Interagency Task Force on Indian Women, the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Women, the National Advisory Council Women's Educational Program, the Task Force on Sex Discrimination, the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Rights and Responsibilities of Women),
5. The following associations and organization (League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and the National Council of Women in Education),
6. Educational associations in each state.

We asked each source to submit names as he/she chose of those top women who were influential in educational policymaking and had worked on an issue during the past year. Of the 83 women named, thirteen were named by informants from at least three of the six different sources. They included one from Louisiana, one from Mississippi, four from Texas, one from Oklahoma, three from New Mexico, and three from Arkansas.

Table 5

TOTAL REGION

Analysis of Occupations/Roles Held by 13 Women Influentials in 1979

Role Category / Role Title	Number	%
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	(3)	23
1. Ass't. Ex. Secy., State Education Association	1	
2. Past Pres., National School Board Association/ Attorney	1	
3. President, National AAUW	1	
FEDERAL	(1)	8
1. Former Regional OCR Director/Journalist	1	
GUBERNATORIAL	(3)	23
1. Governor's Wife/Attorney	1	
2. Lieutenant Governor	1	
3. Member, Governor's Advisory Commission on Educ.	1	
STATE LEGISLATURE	(5)	38
1. Representative	3	
2. Senator	2	
STATE SCHOOL BOARD	(1)	8
1. Member	1	
TOTAL	13	100%

Table 5, which presents an analysis of their occupations/roles shows that 38 percent are legislators, 23 percent are identified with educational associations, another 23 percent with a governor's office, and the remainder with a regional office of the federal government and a state school board.

Interviews are now in progress to trace their interaction with other influentials on educational issues.

It is much too early in our work to draw any conclusions, but it is appropriate to make some observations.

1. Noneducators are at least perceived to be powerful in educational policymaking. While in 1977 there were 36 percent in occupations/roles unrelated to education, the percentage had increased to 54 percent by 1979. Among women, 69 percent were in occupations/roles unrelated to education.

2. There may be identifiable pools of power, consisting of individuals readying themselves to become more influential. Of the 37 individuals identified in 1977 as second raters and third raters, almost a third had moved into the power structure by 1979.

It is too early to judge the efficacy of these techniques as cost effective or more appropriate for our uses than the decisional approach techniques we are currently using in another study, though the first data emerging tend to suggest that both are true. It also is too early to discuss paths, prediction possibilities, and kinds of structures. It does seem appropriate, however, for me to remark upon the fact that women who would like to be influential in educational policymaking may need to choose a career other than education.

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